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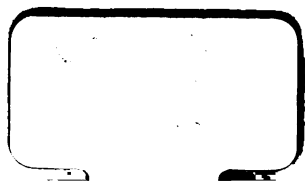
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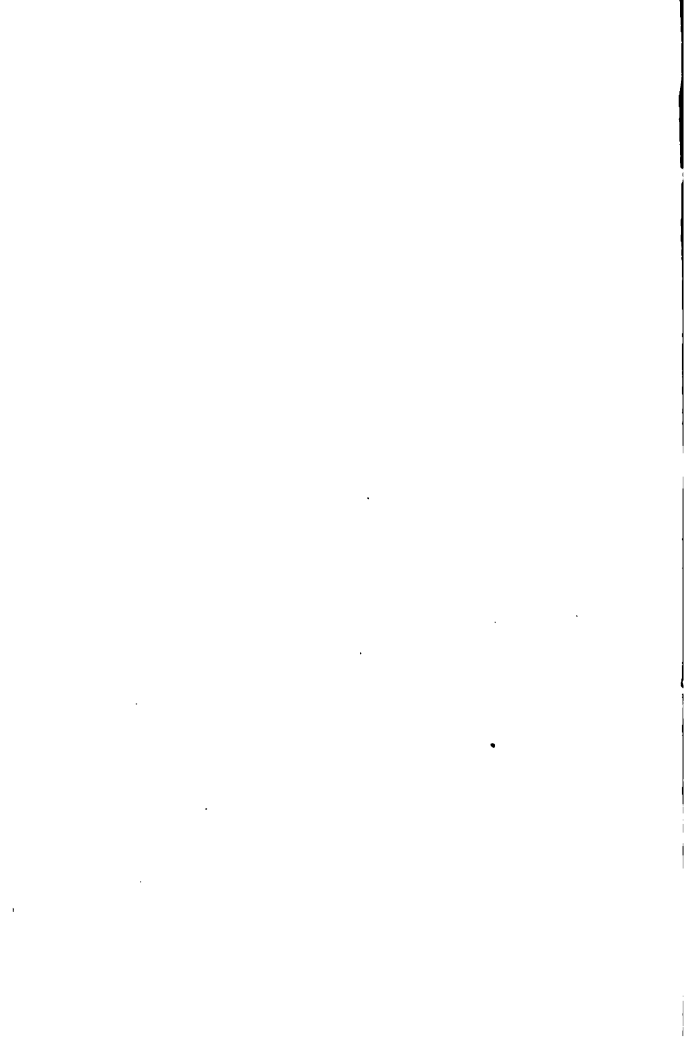
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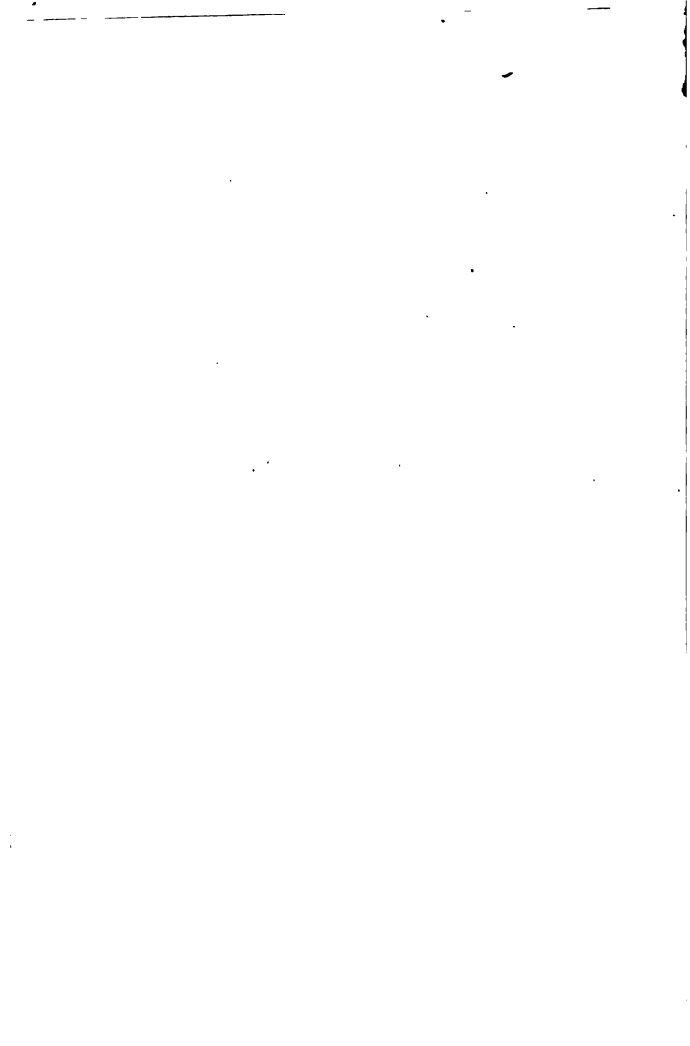


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TILDEN FOUNDATION
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Michael Angelo



The Sonnets of Michael
Angelo Buonarroti

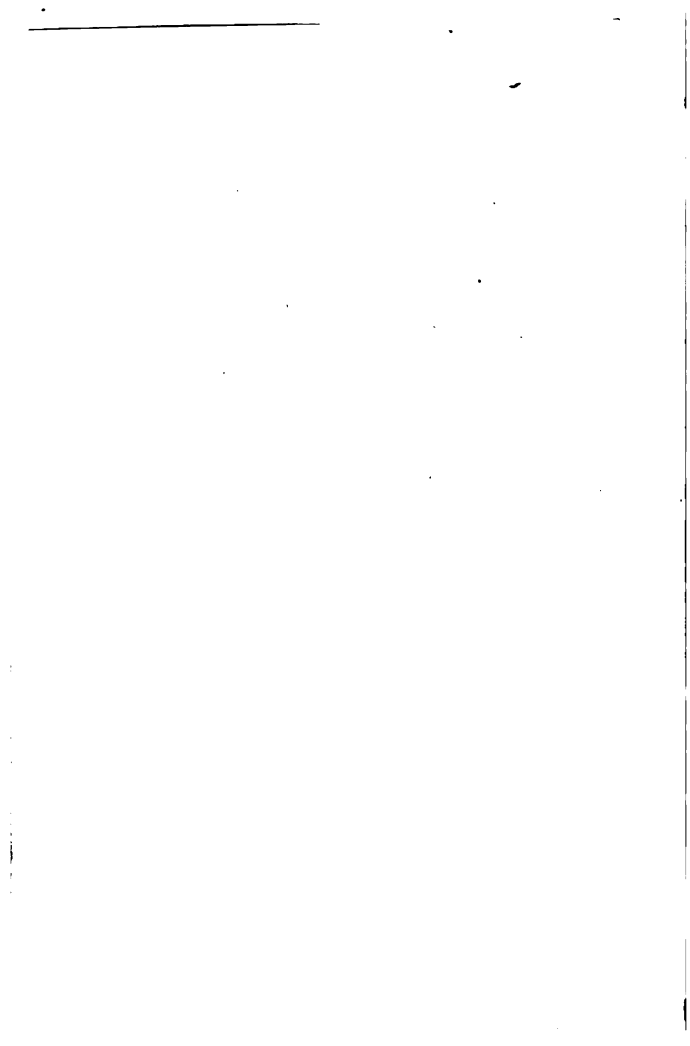
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John Addington Symonds



New York and London
G. P. Putnam's Sons
The Knickerbocker Press

1902
E.M.B.



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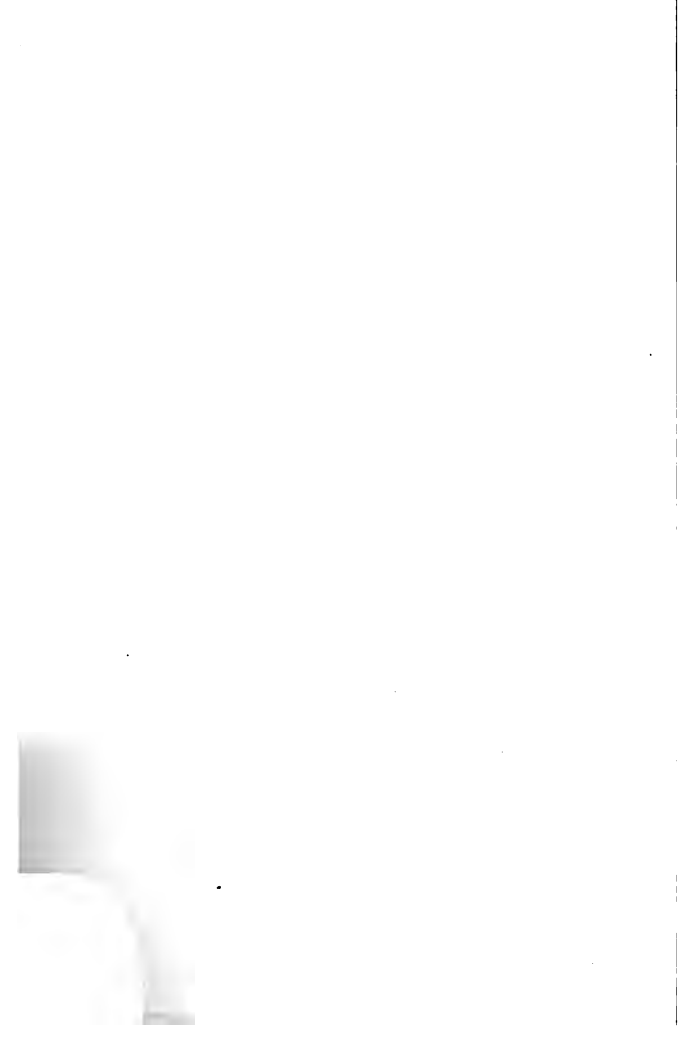
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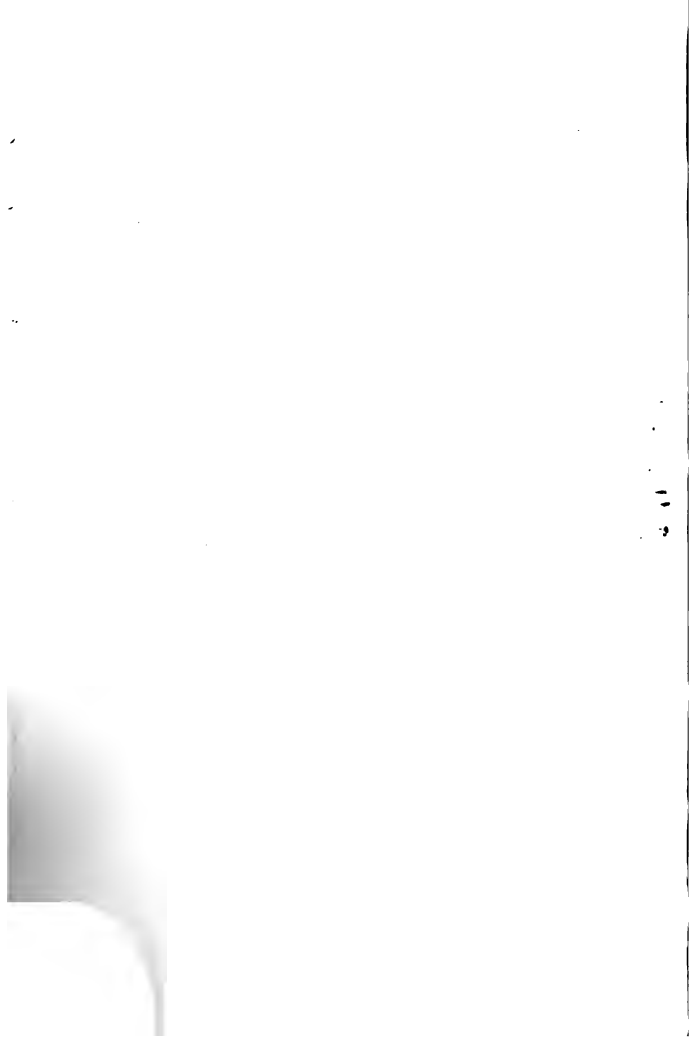


PROEM.

THE PHILOSOPHIC FLIGHT.

Poi che spiegate.

NOW *that these wings to speed my
wish ascend,
The more I feel vast air beneath my
feet,
The more toward boundless air on
pinions fleet,
Spurning the earth, soaring to
heaven, I tend :
Nor makes them stoop their flight the
direful end
Of Dædal's son ; but upward still
they beat :—*





I.

ON DANTE ALIGHIERI

Dal ciel discese

FROM heaven his spirit came, and
robed in clay,

The realms of justice and of mercy
trod :

Then rose a living man to gaze on
God,

That he might make the truth as
clear as day.

For that pure star, that brightened
with his ray

The undeserving nest where I was
born,

On Dante Alighieri

The whole wide world would be a
prize to scorn ;
None but his Maker can due guerdon
pay.

I speak of Dante, whose high work re-
mains

Unknown, unhonoured by that
thankless brood,

Who only to just men deny their
wage.

Were I but he ! Born for like linger-
ing pains,

Against his exile coupled with his
good

I 'd gladly change the world's best
heritage !



II.

ON DANTE ALIGHIERI

Quante dirne si de'

NO tongue can tell of him what
should be told,

For on blind eyes his splendour
shines too strong ;

'T were easier to blame those who
wrought him wrong,

Than sound his least praise with a
mouth of gold.

He to explore the place of pain was
bold,

Then soared to God, to teach our
souls by song ;

On Dante Alighieri

The gates heaven oped to bear his
feet along,

Against his just desire his country
rolled.

Thankless I call her, and to her own
pain

The nurse of fell mischance; for sign
take this,

That ever to the best she deals more
scorn :

Among a thousand proofs let one re-
main ;

Though ne'er was fortune more un-
just than his,

His equal or his better ne'er was
born.



III.

TO POPE JULIUS II

Signor, se vero è

MY Lord ! if ever ancient saw spake
sooth,

Hear this which saith : Who can,
doth never will.

Lo ! thou hast lent thine ear to
fables still,

Rewarding those who hate the name
of truth.

I am thy drudge and have been from
my youth—

Thine, like the rays which the sun's
circle fill ;

To Pope Julius II.

Yet of my dear time's waste thou
think'st no ill :

The more I toil, the less I move thy
ruth.

Once 't was my hope to raise me by
thy height ;

But 't is the balance and the power-
ful sword

Of Justice, not false Echo, that we
need.

Heaven, as it seems, plants virtue in
despite

Here on the earth, if this be our re-
ward—

To seek for fruit on trees too dry to
breed.



IV

ON ROME IN THE PONTIFICATE OF JULIUS II

Qua si fa elmi.

HERE helms and swords are made
of chalices :

The blood of Christ is sold so much
the quart :

His cross and thorns are spears and
shields ; and short

Must be the time ere even His pa-
tience cease.

Nay let Him come no more to raise the
fees

Of this foul sacrilege beyond report!

On Rome in the Pontificate of Julius II

For Rome still flays and sells Him
at the court,

Where paths are closed to virtue's
fair increase.

Now were fit time for me to scrape a
treasure !

Seeing that work and gain are gone ;
while he

Who wears the robe is my Medusa
still.

God welcomes poverty perchance with
pleasure :

But of that better life what hope have
we,

When the blessed banner leads to
nought but ill ?



V

ON THE PAINTING OF THE
SISTINE CHAPEL

TO GIOVANNI DA PISTOJA

I' ho già fatto un gozzo.

I 'VE grown a goitre by dwelling in
this den—

As cats from stagnant streams in
Lombardy,

Or in what other land they hap to
be—

Which drives the belly close beneath
the chin :

My beard turns up to heaven ; my
nape falls in,

On the Painting of the Sistine Chapel

Fixed on my spine : my breast-bone
visibly

Grows like a harp: a rich embroidery
Bedews my face from brush-drops
thick and thin.

My loins into my paunch like levers
grind :

My buttock like a crupper bears my
weight ;

My feet unguided wander to and fro ;
In front my skin grows loose and long ;
behind

By bending it becomes more taut
and straight ;

Crosswise I strain me like a Syrian
bow :

Whence false and quaint, I know,
Must be the fruit of squinting brain
and eye ;

For ill can aim the gun that bends
awry.

On the Painting of the Sistine Chapel

Come then, Giovanni, try
To succour my dead pictures and my
fame ;
Since foul I fare and painting is my
shame.



VI

INVECTIVE AGAINST THE
PEOPLE OF PISTOJA

I' l' ho, vostra mercè.

I 'VE gotten it, thanks to your
courtesy ;

And I have read it twenty times or
so :

Thus much may your sharp snarling
profit you,

As food our flesh filled to satiety.
After I left you, I could plainly see
How Cain was of your ancestors : I
know

You do not shame his lineage, for lo,

Invective against the People of Pistoja

Your brother's good still seems your
injury.

Envious you are, and proud, and foes
to heaven ;

Love of your neighbour still you
loathe and hate,

And only seek what must your ruin
be.

If to Pistoja Dante's curse was given,
Bear that in mind ! Enough ! But
if you prate

Praises of Florence, 't is to wheedle
me.

A priceless jewel she :
Doubtless : but this you cannot
understand :

For pigmy virtue grasps not aught
so grand.



VII

TO LUIGI DEL RICCIO

Nel dolce d' una.

IT happens that the sweet unfathomed
sea

Of seeming courtesy sometimes doth
hide

Offence to life and honour. This
descried,

I hold less dear the health restored
to me.

He who lends wings of hope, while
secretly

He spreads a traitorous snare by the
wayside,

To Luigi Del Riccio

Hath dulled the flame of love, and
mortified
Friendship where friendship burns
most fervently.
Keep then, my dear Luigi, clear and
pure,
That ancient love to which my life I
owe,
That neither wind nor storm its
calm may mar.
For wrath and pain our gratitude
obscure ;
And if the truest truth of love I
know,
One pang outweighs a thousand
pleasures far.



VIII

AFTER THE DEATH OF CEC-
CHINO BRACCI

TO LUIGI DEL RICCIO

A pena prima.

SCARCE had I seen for the first
time his eyes,
Which to your living eyes were life
and light,
When, closed at last in death's in-
jurious night,
He opened them on God in Paradise.
I know it and I weep—too late made
wise :

After the Death of Cecchino Bracci

Yet was the fault not mine ; for
death's fell spite

Robbed my desire of that supreme
delight

Which in your better memory never
dies.

Therefore, Luigi, if the task be mine
To make unique Cecchino smile in
stone

For ever, now that earth hath made
him dim,

If the beloved within the lover shine,
Since art without him cannot work
alone,

You must I carve to tell the world
of him.



IX

THANKS FOR A GIFT

Al zucchero, alla mula.

THE sugar, candles, and the saddled
mule,
Together with your cask of mal-
voisie,
So far exceed all my necessity
That Michael and not I my debt
must rule.
In such a glassy calm the breezes fool
My sinking sails, so that amid the
sea
My bark hath missed her way, and
seems to be

Thanks for a Gift

A wisp of straw whirled on a weltering pool.

To yield thee gift for gift and grace
for grace,

For food and drink and carriage to
and fro,

For all my need in every time and
place,

O my dear Lord, matched with the
much I owe,

All that I am were no real recompense :

Paying a debt is not munificence.



X

ON HIS MISTRESS FAUSTINA
MANCINA

TO GANDOLFO PORRINO

La nuova alta beltà.

THAT new transcendent fair who
seems to be
Peerless in heaven as in this world
of woe,
(The common folk, too blind her
worth to know
And worship, called her Left Arm
wantonly,)
Was made, full well I know, for only
thee :

On his Mistress Faustina Mancina

Nor could I carve or paint the glorious show
Of that fair face : to life thou needs
must go,
To gain the favour thou dost crave
of me.
If like the sun each star of heaven
outshining,
She conquers and outsoars our soaring
thought,
This bids thee rate her worth at its
real price.
Therefore to satisfy thy ceaseless pin-
ing,
Once more in heaven hath God her
beauty wrought :
God and not I can people Paradise.



XI

ON THE LIVES OF THE
PAINTERS

TO GIORGIO VASARI

Se con lo stile.

WITH pencil and with palette
hitherto

You made your art high Nature's
paragon ;

Nay more, from Nature her own
prize you won,

Making what she made fair more
fair to view.

Now that your learned hand with
labour new

On the Lives of the Painters

Of pen and ink a worthier work
hath done,

What erst you lacked, what still re-
mained her own,

The power of giving life, is gained
for you.

If men in any age with Nature vied

In beauteous workmanship, they
had to yield

When to the fated end years brought
their name.

You, re-illuminating memories that died,
In spite of Time and Nature have
revealed

For them and for yourself eternal
fame.



XII

A MATCHLESS COURTESY

TO VITTORIA COLONNA

Felice spirto.

BLEST spirit, who with loving
tenderness

Quickenest my heart, so old and near
to die,

Who 'mid thy joys on me dost bend
an eye

Though many nobler men around
thee press !

As thou wert erewhile wont my sight
to bless,

A Matchless Courtesy

So to console my mind thou now
dost fly ;
Hope therefore stills the pangs of
memory,
Which, coupled with desire, my soul
distress.
So finding in thee grace to plead for
me—
Thy thoughts for me sunk in so sad
a case—
He who now writes returns thee
thanks for these.
Lo ! it were foul and monstrous usury
To send thee ugliest paintings in the
place
Of thy fair spirit's living phantasies.



XIII

BRAZEN GIFTS FOR GOLDEN

TO VITTORIA COLONNA

Per esser manco almen.

SEEKING at least to be not all unfit
For thy sublime and boundless
courtesy,
My lowly thoughts at first were fain
to try
What they could yield for grace so
infinite.
But now I know my unassisted wit
Is all too weak to make me soar so
high ;

Brazen Gifts for Golden

For pardon, lady, for this fault I cry,
And wiser still I grow remembering
it.

Yea, well I see what folly 't were to
think

That largess dropped from thee like
dews from heaven

Could e'er be paid by work so frail
as mine !

To nothingness my art and talent sink ;
He fails who from his mortal stores
hath given

A thousandfold to match one gift
divine.



XIV

FIRST READING

THE MODEL AND THE STATUE

TO VITTORIA COLONNA

Da che concetto.

WHEN divine Art conceives a form
and face,
She bids the craftsman for his first
essay
To shape a simple model in mere
clay :
This is the earliest birth of Art's
embrace.

The Model and the Statue

From the live marble in the second
place

His mallet brings into the light of
day

A thing so beautiful that who can
say

When time shall conquer that im-
mortal grace ?

Thus my own model I was born to be—
The model of that nobler self,
whereto

Schooled by your pity, lady, I shall
grow.

Each overplus and each deficiency

You will make good. What pen-
ance then is due

For my fierce heat, chastened and
taught by you ?



XIV

SECOND READING

THE MODEL, AND THE
STATUE

TO VITTORIA COLONNA

Se ben concetto.

WHEN that which is divine in us
doth try
To shape a face, both brain and hand
unite
To give, from a mere model frail and
slight,
Life to the stone by Art's free
energy.

The Model and the Statue

Thus too before the painter dares to
ply

Paint-brush on canvas, he is wont to
write

Sketches on scraps of paper, and in-
vite

.Wise minds to judge his figured his-
tory.

So, born a model rude and mean to be
Of my poor self, I gain a nobler
birth,

Lady, from you, you fountain of all
worth !

Each overplus and each deficiency

You will make good. What penance
then is due

For my fierce heat, chastened and
taught by you ?



XV

THE LOVER AND THE
SCULPTOR

Non ha l' ottimo artista.

THE best of artists hath no thought
to show
Which the rough stone in its super-
fluous shell
Doth not include: to break the
marble spell
Is all the hand that serves the brain
can do.
The ill I shun, the good I seek, even
so
In thee, fair lady, proud, ineffable,

The Lover and the Sculptor

Lies hidden : but the art I wield so
well
Works adverse to my wish, and
lays me low.
Therefore not love, nor thy transcend-
ent face,
Nor cruelty, nor misfortune, nor dis-
dain,
Cause my mischance, nor fate, nor
destiny ;
Since in thy heart thou carriest death
and grace
Enclosed together, and my worth-
less brain
Can draw forth only death to feed
on me.



XVI

LOVE AND ART

Si come nella penna.

AS pen and ink alike serve him who
sings
In high or low or intermediate style ;
As the same stone hath shapes both
rich and vile
To match the fancies that each mas-
ter brings ;
So, my loved lord, within thy bosom
springs
Pride mixed with meekness and kind
thoughts that smile :

Love and Art

Whence I draw nought, my sad self
to beguile,
But what my face shows—dark
imaginings.
He who for seed sows sorrow, tears,
and sighs,
(The dews that fall from heaven,
though pure and clear,
From different germs take divers
qualities,)
Must needs reap grief and garner
weeping eyes ;
And he who looks on beauty with
sad cheer,
Gains doubtful hope and certain
miseries.



XVII

THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

Com' esser, donna, può.

HOW can that be, lady, which all
men learn
By long experience? Shapes that
seem alive,
Wrought in hard mountain marble,
will survive
Their maker, whom the years to
dust return !
Thus to effect cause yields. Art hath
her turn,
And triumphs over Nature. I, who
strive

The Artist and his Work

With Sculpture, know this well; her
wonders live
In spite of time and death, those
tyrants stern.

So I can give long life to both of us
In either way, by colour or by stone,
Making the semblance of thy face
and mine.

Centuries hence when both are buried,
thus
Thy beauty and my sadness shall be
shown,
And men shall say, "For her 't was
wise to pine."



XVIII

BEAUTY AND THE ARTIST

Al cor di zolfo.

A HEART of flaming sulphur, flesh
of tow,
Bones of dry wood, a soul without a
guide
To curb the fiery will, the ruffling
pride
Of fierce desires that from the pas-
sions flow ;
A sightless mind that weak and lame
doth go
Mid snares and pitfalls scattered far
and wide ;—

Beauty and the Artist

What wonder if the first chance
brand applied

To fuel massed like this should make
it glow ?

Add beautiful art, which, brought
with us from heaven,

Will conquer Nature ;—so divine a
power

Belongs to him who strives with
every nerve.

If I was made for art, from childhood
given

A prey for burning beauty to devour,

I blame the mistress I was born to
serve.



XIX

THE AMULET OF LOVE

Io m'è son caro assai più.

FAR more than I was wont myself I
prize :

With you within my heart I rise in
rate,

Just as a gem engraved with delicate
Devices o'er the uncut stone doth
rise ;

Or as a painted sheet exceeds in price
Each leaf left pure and in its virgin
state :

Such then am I since I was conse-
crate

The Amulet of Love

To be the mark for arrows from
your eyes.
Stamped with your seal I 'm safe
where'er I go,
Like one who carries charms or coat
of mail
Against all dangers that his life
assail.
Nor fire nor water now may work me
woe ;
Sight to the blind I can restore by
you,
Heal every wound, and every loss
renew.



XX

THE GARLAND AND THE
GIRDLE

Quanto si gode, lieta.

WHAT joy hath yon glad wreath of
flowers that is
Around her golden hair so deftly
twined,
Each blossom pressing forward from
behind,
As though to be the first her brows
to kiss !
The livelong day her dress hath per-
fect bliss,
That now reveals her breast, now
seems to bind :

The Garland and the Girdle

And that fair woven net of gold re-
fined
Rests on her cheek and throat in
happiness !
Yet still more blissful seems to me the
band,
Gilt at the tips, so sweetly doth it
ring
And clasp the bosom that it serves
to lace :
Yea, and the belt, to such as under-
stand,
Bound round her waist, saith : Here
I 'd ever cling !
What would my arms do in that
girdle's place ?



XXI

THE SILKWORM

D' altrui pietoso.

KIND to the world, but to itself un-
kind,
A worm is born, that, dying noise-
lessly,
Despoils itself to clothe fair limbs,
and be
In its true worth alone by death
divined.
Would I might die for my dear lord to
find
Raiment in my outworn mortality :

The Silkworm

That, changing like the snake, I
might be free
To cast the slough wherein I dwell
confined !
Nay, were it mine, that shaggy fleece
that stays,
Woven and wrought into a vestment
fair,
Around yon breast so beauteous in
such bliss !
All through the day thou 'd clasp me !
Would I were
The shoes that bear that burden !
when the ways
Were wet with rain, thy feet I then
should kiss !



XXII

WAITING IN FAITH

Se nel volto per gli occhi.

IF through the eyes the heart speaks
clear and true,
I have no stronger sureties than
these eyes
For my pure love. Prithee let them
suffice,
Lord of my soul, pity to gain from
you.
More tenderly perchance than is my
due,
Your spirit sees into my heart, where
rise

Waiting in Faith

The flames of holy worship, nor
denies

The grace reserved for those who
humbly sue.

Oh, blessed day when you at last are
mine !

Let time stand still, and let noon's
chariot stay ;

Fixed be that moment on the dial of
heaven !

That I may clasp and keep, by grace
divine,

Clasp in these yearning arms and
keep for aye

My heart's loved lord to me desert-
less given !



XXIII

FLESH AND SPIRIT

Ben posson gli occhi.

WELL, may these eyes of mine both
near and far

Behold the beams that from thy
beauty flow ;

But, lady, feet must halt where sight
may go :

We see, but cannot climb to clasp a
star.

The pure ethereal soul surmounts that
bar

Of flesh, and soars to where thy
splendours glow,

Flesh and Spirit

Free through the eyes ; while prisoned here below,
Though fired with fervent love, our bodies are.

Clogged with mortality and wingless,
we

Cannot pursue an angel in her flight:
Only to gaze exhausts our utmost
might.

Yet, if but heaven like earth incline to
thee,

Let my whole body be one eye to see,
That not one part of me may miss
thy sight !



XXIV

THE DOOM OF BEAUTY

Spirto ben nato.

CHOICE soul, in whom, as in a
glass, we see,
Mirrored in thy pure form and deli-
cate,
What beauties heaven and nature
can create,
The paragon of all their works to be !
Fair soul, in whom love, pity, piety,
Have found a home, as from thy out-
ward state
We clearly read, and are so rare and
great

The Doom of Beauty

That they adorn none other like to
thee !

Love takes me captive ; beauty binds
my soul ;

Pity and mercy with their gentle
eyes

Wake in my heart a hope that can-
not cheat.

What law, what destiny, what fell con-
trol,

What cruelty, or late or soon, denies
That death should spare perfection
so complete ?



XXV

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF
BEAUTY

A DIALOGUE WITH LOVE

Dimmi di grazia, amor.

NAY, prithee tell me, Love, when I
 behold
 My lady, do mine eyes her beauty
 see
 In truth, or dwells that loveliness in
 me
 Which multiplies her grace a thou-
 sandfold ?
Thou needs must know ; for thou with
 her of old

The Transfiguration of Beauty

Comest to stir my soul's tranquillity;
Yet would I not seek one sigh less,
or be

By loss of that loved flame more
simply cold.

The beauty thou discernest, all is hers;
But grows in radiance as it soars on
high

Through mortal eyes unto the soul
above :

'T is there transfigured ; for the soul
confers

On what she holds, her own divinity:
And this transfigured beauty wins
thy love.



XXVI

JOY MAY KILL,

Non men gran grazia, donna.

TOO much good luck no less than
misery

May kill a man condemned to mortal
pain,

If, lost to hope and chilled in every
vein,

A sudden pardon comes to set him
free.

Thus thy unwonted kindness shown
to me

Amid the gloom where only sad
thoughts reign,

Joy May Kill

With too much rapture bringing
light again,
Threatens my life more than that
agony.

Good news and bad may bear the self-
same knife ;
And death may follow both upon
their flight ;
For hearts that shrink or swell, alike
will break.

Let then thy beauty, to preserve my
life,
Temper the source of this supreme
delight,
Lest joy so poignant slay a soul so
weak.



XXVII

NO ESCAPE FROM LOVE

Non posso altra figura.

I CANNOT by the utmost flight of
thought
Conceive another form of air or
clay,
Wherewith against thy beauty to
array
My wounded heart in armour fancy-
wrought :
For, lacking thee, so low my state is
brought,
That Love hath stolen all my
strength away ;

No Escape from Love

Whence, when I fain would halve
my griefs, they weigh
With double sorrow, and I sink to
nought.

Thus all in vain my soul to scape thee
flies,

For ever faster flies her beauteous
foe :

From the swift-footed feebly run the
slow !

Yet with his hands Love wipes my
weeping eyes,

Saying, this toil will end in happy
cheer ;

What costs the heart so much, must
needs be dear !



XXVIII

THE HEAVENLY BIRTH OF
LOVE AND BEAUTY

La vita del mie amor.

THIS heart of flesh feeds not with
life my love :

The love wherewith I love thee hath
no heart ;

Nor harbours it in any mortal part,
Where erring thought or ill desire
may move.

When first Love sent our souls from
God above,

He fashioned me to see thee as thou
art—

Heavenly Birth of Love and Beauty

Pure light ; and thus I find God's
counterpart

In thy fair face, and feel the sting
thereof.

As heat from fire, from loveliness
divine

The mind that worships what recalls
the sun

From whence she sprang, can be
divided never:

And since thine eyes all Paradise en-
shrine,

Burning unto those orbs of light I
run,

There where I loved thee first to
dwell for ever.



XXIX

LOVE'S DILEMMA

I' mi credetti.

I DEEMED upon that day when first
I knew
So many peerless beauties blent in
one,
That, like an eagle gazing on the
sun,
Mine eyes might fix on the least part
of you.
That dream hath vanished, and my
hope is flown ;
For he who fain a seraph would
pursue

Love's Dilemma

Wingless, hath cast words to the
winds, and dew
On stones, and gauged God's reason
with his own.
If then my heart cannot endure the
blaze
Of beauties infinite that blind these
eyes,
Nor yet can bear to be from you
divided,
What fate is mine? Who guides or
guards my ways,
Seeing my soul, so lost and ill-
betided,
Burns in your presence, in your ab-
sence dies?



XXX

LOVE THE LIGHT-GIVER

TO TOMMASO DE' CAVALIERI

Veggio co' bei vostri occhi.

WITH your fair eyes a charming
light I see,
For which my own blind eyes would
peer in vain ;
Stayed by your feet, the burden I
sustain
Which my lame feet find all too
strong for me ;
Wingless upon your pinions forth I
fly ;

Love the Light-Giver

Heavenward your spirit stirreth me
to strain ;
E'en as you will, I blush and blanch
again,
Freeze in the sun, burn 'neath a
frosty sky.
Your will includes and is the lord of
mine ;
Life to my thoughts within your
heart is given ;
My words begin to breathe upon
your breath :
Like to the moon am I, that cannot
shine
Alone ; for lo ! our eyes see nought
in heaven
Save what the living sun illumineth.



XXXI

LOVE'S LORDSHIP

TO TOMMASO DE' CAVALIERI

A che più debb' io.

WHY should I seek to ease intense
desire
With still more tears and windy
words of grief,
When heaven, or late or soon, sends
no relief
To souls whom love hath robed
around with fire?
Why need my aching heart to death
aspire,

Love's Lordship

When all must die? Nay, death
beyond belief

Unto these eyes would be both sweet
and brief,

Since in my sum of woes all joys
expire !

Therefore, because I cannot shun the
blow

I rather seek, say who must rule my
breast,

Gliding between her gladness and
her woe ?

If only chains and bands can make me
blest,

No marvel if alone and bare I go,
An arméd KNIGHT'S captive and
slave confessed.



XXXII

LOVE'S EXPOSTULATION

S' un casto amor.

If love be chaste, if virtue conquer
ill,
If fortune bind both lovers in one
bond,
If either at the other's grief despond,
If both be governed by one life, one
will ;
If in two bodies one soul triumph still,
Raising the twain from earth to
heaven beyond,
If Love with one blow and one gol-
den wand

Love's Expostulation

Have power both smitten breasts to
pierce and thrill ;
If each the other love, himself fore-
going,
With such delight, such savour, and
so well,
That both to one sole end their wills
combine ;
If thousands of these thoughts, all
thought outgoing,
Fail the least part of their firm love
to tell :
Say, can mere angry spite this knot
untwine ?



XXXIII

FIRST READING

A PRAYER TO NATURE

AMOR REDIVIVUS

Perchè tuo gran bellezze.

THAT thy great beauty on our earth
may be
Shrined in a lady softer and more
kind,
I call on nature to collect and bind
All those delights the slow years
steal from thee,
And save them to restore the radiancy

A Prayer to Nature

Of thy bright face in some fair form
designed
By heaven ; and may love ever bear
in mind
To mould her heart of grace and
courtesy.
I call on nature too to keep my sighs,
My scattered tears to take and re-
combine,
And give to him who loves that fair
again :
More happy he perchance shall move
those eyes
To mercy by the griefs wherewith I
pine,
Nor lose the kindness that from me
is ta'en !



XXXIII

SECOND READING

A PRAYER TO NATURE

AMOR REDIVIVUS

Sol perchè tue bellezze.

IF only that thy beauties here may be
Deathless through Time that rends
the wreaths he twined,
I trust that Nature will collect and
bind
All those delights the slow years
steal from thee,
And keep them for a birth more happily

A Prayer to Nature

Born under better auspices, refined
Into a heavenly form of nobler mind,
And dowered with all thine angel
purity.

Ah me ! and may heaven also keep my
sighs,

My scattered tears preserve and re-
unite,

And give to him who loves that fair
again !

More happy he perchance shall move
those eyes

To mercy by the griefs my manhood
blight,

Nor lose the kindness that from me
is ta'en !



XXXIV

LOVE'S FURNACE

Sì amico al freddo sasso.

SO friendly is the fire to flinty stone,
That, struck therefrom and kindled to a blaze,
It burns the stone, and from the ash
doth raise
What lives thenceforward binding
stones in one :
Kiln-hardened this resists both frost
and sun,
Acquiring higher worth for endless
days—
As the purged soul from hell returns
with praise,

Love's Furnace

Amid the heavenly host to take her
throne.
E'en so the fire struck from my soul,
that lay
Close-hidden in my heart, may temper me,
Till burned and slaked to better life
I rise.
If, made mere smoke and dust, I live
to-day,
Fire-hardened I shall live eternally ;
Such gold, not iron, my spirit strikes
and tries.



XXXV

LOVE'S PARADOXES

Sento d' un foco.

FAR off with fire I feel a cold face lit,
That makes me burn, the while
itself doth freeze :

Two fragile arms enchain me, which
with ease,

Unmoved themselves, can move
weights infinite

A soul none knows but I, most ex-
quisite,

That, deathless, deals me death, my
spirit sees :

I meet with one who, free, my heart
doth seize :

Love's Paradoxes

And who alone can cheer, hath tortured it.

How can it be that from one face like thine

My own should feel effects so contrary,

Since ill comes not from things devoid of ill ?

That loveliness perchance doth make me pine,

Even as the sun, whose fiery beams we see,

Inflames the world, while he is temperate still.



XXXVI

LOVE MISINTERPRETED

Se l'immortal desio.

IF the undying thirst that purifies
Our mortal thoughts, could
draw mine to the day,
Perchance the lord who now holds
cruel sway
In Love's high house, would prove
more kindly-wise.
But since the laws of heaven immor-
talise
Our souls, and doom our flesh to
swift decay,
Tongue cannot tell how fair, how
pure as day,

Love Misinterpreted

Is the soul's thirst that far beyond
it lies.
How then, ah woe is me ! shall that
chaste fire,
Which burns the heart within me,
be made known,
If sense finds only sense in what it
sees ?
All my fair hours are turned to mis-
eries
With my loved lord, who minds but
lies alone ;
For, truth to tell, who trusts not is
a liar.



XXXVII

LOVE'S SERVITUDE

PERHAPS TO VITTORIA COLONNA

S' alcun legato è pur.

HE who is bound by some great
benefit,
As to be raised from death to life
again,
How shall he recompense that gift,
or gain
Freedom from servitude so infinite?
Yet if 't were possible to pay the debt,
He 'd lose that kindness which we
entertain

Love's Servitude

For those who serve us well ; since
it is plain

That kindness needs some boon to
quicken it.

Wherefore, O lady, to maintain thy
grace,

So far above my fortune, what I
bring

Is rather thanklessness than cour-
tesy :

For if both met as equals face to face,
She whom I love could not be called
my king;—

There is no lordship in equality.



XXXVIII

LOVE'S VAIN EXPENSE

Rendete a gli occhi miei.

GIVE back unto mine eyes, ye fount
and rill,

Those streams, not yours, that are
so full and strong,

That swell your springs, and roll
your waves along

With force unwonted in your native
hill !

And thou, dense air, weighed with my
sighs so chill,

That hidest heaven's own light thick
mists among,

Love's Vain Expense

Give back those sighs to my sad
heart, nor wrong

My visual ray with thy dark face of
ill !

Let earth give back the footprints that
I wore,

That the bare grass I spoiled may
sprout again ;

And Echo, now grown deaf, my cries
return !

Loved eyes, unto mine eyes those looks
restore,

And let me woo another not in vain,
Since how to please thee I shall never
learn !



XXXIX

LOVE'S ARGUMENT WITH
REASON

La ragion meco si lamenta.

REASON laments and grieves full
sore with me,
The while I hope by loving to be
blest ;
With precepts sound and true phi-
losophy
My shame she quickens thus within
my breast :
“What else but death will that sun
deal to thee—
Nor like the phoenix in her flaming
nest ?”

Love's Argument with Reason

Yet nought avails this wise morality;
No hand can save a suicide confessed.
I know my doom ; the truth I apprehend :
But on the other side my traitorous heart
Slays me whene'er to wisdom's words
I bend.
Between two deaths my lady stands
apart :
This death I dread ; that none can
comprehend.
In this suspense body and soul must
part.



XI

FIRST READING

LOVE'S LOADSTONE

No so s' è la desiata luce.

I KNOW not if it be the longed-for
light
Of her first Maker which the spirit
feels ;
Or if a time-old memory reveals
Some other beauty for the heart's
delight ;
Or fame or dreams beget that vision
bright,
Sweet to the eyes, which through the
bosom steals,

Love's Loadstone

Leaving I know not what that
wounds and heals,

And now perchance hath made me
weep outright.

Be this what this may be, 't is this I
seek :

Nor guide have I ; nor know I where
to find

That burning fire ; yet some one
seems to lead.

This, since I saw thee, lady, makes
me weak ;

A bitter-sweet sways here and there
my mind,

And sure I am thine eyes this mis-
chief breed.



XL

SECOND READING

LOVE'S LOADSTONE

Non so se s' è l' immaginata luce.

I KNOW not if it be the fancied light
Which every man or more or less
doth feel ;
Or if the mind and memory reveal
Some other beauty for the heart's
delight ;
Or if within the soul the vision bright
Of her celestial home once more
doth steal,
Drawing our better thoughts with
pure appeal

Love's Loadstone

To the true Good above all mortal
sight :
This light I long for and unguided
seek ;
This fire that burns my heart, I can-
not find ;
Nor know the way, though some one
seems to lead.
This, since I saw thee, lady, makes
me weak :
A bitter-sweet sways here and there
my mind ;
And sure I am thine eyes this mis-
chief breed.



XLI

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Colui che fece.

HE who ordained, when first the
world began,
Time, that was not before creation's
hour,
Divided it, and gave the sun's high
power
To rule the one, the moon the other
span :
Thence fate and changeul chance and
fortune's ban
Did in one moment down on mortals
shower :

Light and Darkness

To me they portioned darkness for a
dower ;

Dark hath my lot been since I was a
man.

Myself am ever mine own counterfeit ;
And as deep night grows still more
dim and dun,

So still of more misdoing must I rue :
Meanwhile this solace to my soul is
sweet,

That my black night doth make
more clear the sun

Which at your birth was given to
wait on you.



XLII

SACRED NIGHT

Ogni van chiuso.

ALL hollow vaults and dungeons
sealed from sight,
All caverns circumscribed with roof
and wall,
Defend dark Night, though noon
around her fall,
From the fierce play of solar day-
beams bright.
But if she be assailed by fire or
light,
Her powers divine are nought ; they
tremble all

Sacred Night

Before things far more vile and
trivial—
Even a glow-worm can confound
their might.
The earth that lies bare to the sun,
and breeds
A thousand germs that burgeon and
decay—
This earth is wounded by the
ploughman's share :
But only darkness serves for human
seeds ;
Night therefore is more sacred far
than day,
Since man excels all fruits however
fair.



XLIII

THE IMPEACHMENT OF
NIGHT

Perchè Febo non torce.

WHAT time bright Phœbus doth
not stretch and bend
His shining arms around this terrene
sphere,
The people call that season dark and
drear
Night, for the cause they do not
comprehend.
So weak is Night that if our hand
extend

The Impeachment of Night

A glimmering torch, her shadows
disappear,

Leaving her dead ; like frailest
gossamere,

Tinder and steel her mantle rive and
rend.

Nay, if this Night be anything at all,
Sure she is daughter of the sun and
earth ;

This holds, the other spreads that
shadowy pall.

Howbeit they err who praise this
gloomy birth,

So frail and desolate and void of
mirth

That one poor firefly can her might
appal.



XLIV

THE DEFENCE OF NIGHT

O nott' o dolce tempo.

O NIGHT, O sweet though sombre
span of time !—

All things find rest upon their jour-
ney's end—

Whoso hath praised thee, well doth
apprehend ;

And whoso honours thee, hath wis-
dom's prime.

Our cares thou canst to quietude sub-
lime ;

For dews and darkness are of peace
the friend :

The Defence of Night

Often by thee in dreams upborne, I
 wend
From earth to heaven, where yet I
 hope to climb.
Thou shade of Death, through whom
 the soul at length
Shuns pain and sadness hostile to
 the heart,
Whom mourners find their last and
 sure relief !
Thou dost restore our suffering flesh
 to strength,
Driest our tears, assuagest every
 smart,
Purging the spirits of the pure from
 grief.



XLV

LOVE FEEDS THE FLAME OF
AGE

Quand' il servo il signior.

WHEN masters bind a slave with
cruel chain,
And keep him hope-forlorn in bond-
age pent,
Use tames his temper to imprison-
ment,
And hardly would he fain be free
again.
Use curbs the snake and tiger, and
doth train

Love Feeds the Flame of Age

Fierce woodland lions to bear chastisement ;

And the young artist, all with toil forspent,

By constant use a giant's strength doth gain.

But with the force of flame it is not so:

For while fire sucks the sap of the green wood,

It warms a frore old man and makes him grow ;

With such fine heat of youth and lustihood

Filling his heart and teaching it to glow,

That love enfolds him with beatitude.

 If then in playful mood

He sport and jest, old age need no man blame ;

Love Feeds the Flame of Age

For loving things divine implies no
shame.

The soul that knows her aim,
Sins not by loving God's own coun-
terfeit—

Due measure kept, and bounds, and
order meet.



XLVI

LOVE'S FLAME DOTH FEED
ON AGE

Se da' prim' anni.

IF some mild heat of love in youth
confessed

Burns a fresh heart with swift con-
suming fire,

What will the force be of a flame
more dire

Shut up within an old man's cindery
breast ?

If the mere lapse of lengthening years
hath pressed

Love's Flame Doth Feed on Age

So sorely that life, strength, and
vigour tire,

How shall he fare who must ere long
expire,

When to old age is added love's
unrest?

Weak as myself, he will be whirled
away

Like dust by winds kind in their
cruelty,

Robbing the loathly worm of its last
prey.

A little flame consumed and fed on
me

In my green age: now that the
wood is dry,

What hope against this fire more
fierce have I?



XLVII

BEAUTY'S INTOLERABLE
SPLENDOUR

Se 'l foco alla bellezza.

IF but the fire that lightens in thine
eyes

Were equal with their beauty, all
the snow

And frost of all the world would
melt and glow

Like brands that blaze beneath
fierce tropic skies.

But heaven in mercy to our miseries
Dulls and divides the fiery beams
that flow

Beauty's Intolerable Splendour

From thy great loveliness, that we
may go

Through this stern mortal life in
tranquil wise.

Thus beauty burns not with consum-
ing rage ;

For so much only of the heavenly
light

Inflames our love as finds a fervent
heart.

This is my case, lady, in sad old age :
If seeing thee, I do not die outright,
'T is that I feel thy beauty but in
part.



XLVIII

LOVE'S EVENING

Se 'l troppo indugio.

WHAT though long waiting wins
more happiness

Than petulant desire is wont to
gain,

My luck in latest age hath brought
me pain,

Thinking how brief must be an old
man's bliss.

Heaven, if it heed our lives, can hardly
bless

This fire of love when frosts are wont
to reign :

Love's Evening

For so I love thee, lady, and my
 strain
Of tears through age exceeds in
 tenderness.
Yet peradventure though my day is
 done,—
 Though nearly past the setting mid
 thick cloud
And frozen exhalations sinks my
 sun,—
If love to only mid-day be allowed,
And I an old man in my evening
 burn,
You, lady, still my night to noon
 may turn.



XLIX

LOVE'S EXCUSE

Dal dolcie pianto.

FROM happy tears to woful smiles,
from peace

Eternal to a brief and hollow
truce,

How have I fallen!—when 't is truth
we lose,

Sense triumphs o'er all adverse im-
pulses.

I know not if my heart bred this
disease,

That still more pleasing grows with
growing use ;

Love's Excuse

Or else thy face, thine eyes, which
stole the hues
And fires of Paradise—less fair than
these.

Thy beauty is no mortal thing ; 't was
sent

From heaven on high to make our
earth divine:

Wherefore, though wasting, burn-
ing, I 'm content ;

For in thy sight what could I do but
pine ?

If God himself thus rules my des-
tiny,

Who, when I die, can lay the blame
on thee ?



L

IN LOVE'S OWN TIME

S' i' avessi creduto.

HAD I but earlier known that from
the eyes
Of that bright soul that fires me like
the sun,
I might have drawn new strength
my race to run,
Burning as burns the phœnix ere it
dies;
Even as the stag or lynx or leopard
flies
To seek his pleasure and his pain to
shun,

In Love's Own Time

Each word, each smile of her would
I have won,
Flying where now sad age all flight
denies.
Yet why complain? For even now I
find
In that glad angel's face, so full of
rest,
Health and content, heart's ease and
peace of mind.
Perchance I might have been less
simply blest,
Finding her sooner : if 't is age
alone
That lets me soar with her to seek
God's throne.



LI

FIRST READING

LOVE IN YOUTH AND AGE

Tornami al tempo.

BRING back the time when blind
 desire ran free,
With bit and rein too loose to curb
 his flight ;
Give back the buried face, once
 angel-bright,
That hides in earth all comely things
 from me ;
Bring back those journeys ta'en so
 toilsomely,

Love in Youth and Age

So toilsome-slow to one whose hairs
are white ;

Those tears and flames that in one
breast unite ;

If thou wilt once more take thy fill
of me !

Yet Love ! Suppose it true that thou
dost thrive

Only on bitter honey-dews of tears,
Small profit hast thou of a weak
old man.

My soul that toward the other shore
doth strive,

Wards off thy darts with shafts of
holier fears ;

And fire feeds ill on brands no breath
can fan.



LI

SECOND READING

LOVE IN YOUTH AND AGE

Tornami al tempo.

BRING back the time when glad
desire ran free

With bit and rein too loose to curb
his flight,

The tears and flames that in one
breast unite,

If thou art fain once more to conquer
me !

Bring back those journeys ta'en so
toilsomely,

Love in Youth and Age

So toilsome-slow to him whose hairs
are white !

Give back the buried face once
angel-bright,

That taxed all Nature's art and in-
dustry.

O Love ! an old man finds it hard to
chase

Thy flying pinions ! Thou hast left
thy nest ;

Nor is my heart as light as hereto-
fore.

Put thy gold arrows to the string once
more :

Then if Death hear my prayer and
grant me grace,

My grief I shall forget, again made
blest.



LII

CELESTIAL LOVE

Non vider gli occhi miei.

I SAW no mortal beauty with these
eyes
When perfect peace in thy fair eyes
I found ;
But far within, where all is holy
ground,
My soul felt Love, her comrade of
the skies :
For she was born with God in Para-
dise ;
Else should we still to transient love
be bound ;

Celestial Love

But, finding these so false, we pass
beyond

Unto the Love of loves that never
dies.

Nay, things that die cannot assuage
the thirst

Of souls undying; nor Eternity
Serves Time, where all must fade
that flourisheth.

Sense is not love, but lawlessness ac-
curst :

This kills the soul ; while our love
lifts on high

Our friends on earth — higher in
heaven through death.



LIII

CELESTIAL AND EARTHLY
LOVE

Non è sempre di colpa.

LOVE is not always harsh and deadly
sin,

When love for boundless beauty
makes us pine ;

The heart, by love left soft and
infantine,

Will let the shafts of God's grace
enter in.

Love wings and wakes the soul, stirs
her to win

Celestial and Earthly Love

Her flight aloft, nor e'er to earth
decline ;

'T is the first step that leads her to
the shrine

Of Him who slakes the thirst that
burns within.

The love of that whereof I speak
ascends :

Woman is different far ; the love of
her

But ill befits a heart manly and wise.

The one love soars, the other earth-
ward tends ;

The soul lights this, while that the
senses stir ;

And still lust's arrow at base quarry
flies.



LIV

LOVE LIFTS TO GOD

Veggio nel tuo bel viso.

FROM thy fair face I learn, O my
loved lord,

That which no mortal tongue can
rightly say ;

The soul imprisoned in her house of
clay,

Holpen by thee, to God hath often
soared.

And though the vulgar, vain, malign-
nant horde

Attribute what their grosser wills
obey,

Love Lifts to God

Yet shall this fervent homage that I
pay,
This love, this faith, pure joys for
us afford.
Lo, all the lovely things we find on
earth,
Resemble for the soul that rightly
sees
That source of bliss divine which
gave us birth :
Nor have we first-fruits or remem-
brances
Of heaven elsewhere. Thus, loving
loyally,
I rise to God, and make death sweet
by thee.



LV

LOVE'S ENTREATY

- Tu sa' ch' i' so, Signor mie.

THOU knowest, love, I know that
thou dost know

That I am here more near to thee to
be,

And knowest that I know thou
knowest me :

What means it then that we are
sundered so ?

If they are true, these hopes that from
thee flow,

If it is real, this sweet expectancy,

Love's Entreaty

Break down the wall that stands
'twixt me and thee ;
For pain in prison pent hath double
woe.
Because in thee I love, O my loved
lord,
What thou best lovest, be not there-
fore stern :
Souls burn for souls, spirits to spirits
cry !
I seek the splendour in thy fair face
stored ;
Yet living man that beauty scarce
can learn,
And he who fain would find it, first
must die.



LVI

FIRST READING

HEAVEN-BORN BEAUTY

Per ritornar là.

AS one who will re-seek her home
of light,

Thy form immortal to this prison-
house

Descended, like an angel piteous,
To heal all hearts and make the
whole world bright.

'T is this that thralls my soul in love's
delight,

Not thy clear face of beauty glorious;

Heaven-Born Beauty

For he who harbours virtue, still
will choose
To love what neither years nor death
can blight.
So fares it ever with things high and
rare
Wrought in the sweat of nature ;
heaven above
Showers on their birth the blessings
of her prime :
Nor hath God deigned to show Him-
self elsewhere
More clearly than in human forms
sublime,
Which, since they image Him, alone
I love.



LVI

SECOND READING

HEAVEN-BORN BEAUTY

Venne, non so ben donde.

IT came, I know not whence, from
far above,
That clear, immortal flame that still
doth rise
Within thy sacred breast, and fills
the skies,
And heals all hearts, and adds to
heaven new love.
This burns me, this, and the pure
light thereof ;

Heaven-Born Beauty

Not thy fair face, thy sweet un-
troubled eyes :

For love that is not love for aught
that dies,

Dwells in the soul where no base
passions move.

If then such loveliness upon its own
Should graft new beauties in a mor-
tal birth,

The sheath bespeaks the shining
blade within.

To gain our love God hath not clearer
shown

Himself elsewhere : thus heaven
doth vie with earth

To make thee worthy worship with-
out sin.



LVII

FIRST READING

CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL
LOVE

Passa per gli occhi.

SWIFT through the eyes unto the
heart within
All lovely forms that thrall our
spirit stray ;
So smooth and broad and open is the
way
That thousands and not hundreds
enter in.

Carnal and Spiritual Love

Burdened with scruples and weighed
down with sin,
These mortal beauties fill me with
dismay ;
Nor find I one that doth not strive
to stay
My soul on transient joy, or lets me
win
The heaven I yearn for. Lo, when
erring love—
Who fills the world, howe'er his
power we shun,
Else were the world a grave and we
undone—
Assails the soul, if grace refuse to fan
Our purged desires and make them
soar above,
What grief it were to have been born
a man !



LVII

SECOND READING

CARNAL, AND SPIRITUAL
LOVE

Passa per gli occhi.

SWIFT through the eyes unto the
heart within
All lovely forms that thrall our spirit
stray ;
So smooth and broad and open is
the way
That thousands and not hundreds
enter in
Of every age and sex : whence I
begin,

Carnal and Spiritual Love

Burdened with griefs, but more with
dull dismay,

To fear; nor find mid all their bright
array

One that with full content my heart
may win.

If mortal beauty be the food of love,
It came not with the soul from
heaven, and thus

That love itself must be a mortal
fire:

But if love reach to nobler hopes above,
Thy love shall scorn me not nor
dread desire

That seeks a carnal prey assailing
us.



LVIII

LOVE AND DEATH

Ognor che l' idol mio.

WHENE'ER the idol of these eyes
appears
Unto my musing heart so weak and
strong,
Death comes between her and my
soul ere long
Chasing her thence with troops of
gathering fears.
Nathless this violence my spirit
cheers
With better hope than if she had no
wrong ;

Love and Death

While Love invincible arrays the
throng
Of dauntless thoughts, and thus har-
angues his peers :
But once, he argues, can a mortal die ;
But once be born: and he who dies
afire,
What shall he gain if erst he dwelt
with me ?
That burning love whereby the soul
flies free,
Doth lure each fervent spirit to aspire
Like gold refined in flame to God on
high.



LIX

LOVE IS A REFINER'S FIRE

Non più ch' 'l foco il fabbro.

IT is with fire that blacksmiths iron
subdue

Unto fair form, the image of their
thought :

Nor without fire hath any artist
wrought

Gold to its utmost purity of hue.

Nay, nor the unmatched phoenix lives
anew,

Unless she burn : if then I am dis-
traught

Love is a Refiner's Fire

By fire, I may to better life be
brought
Like those whom death restores nor
years undo.
The fire whereof I speak, is my great
cheer ;
Such power it hath to renovate and
raise
Me who was almost numbered with
the dead ;
And since by nature fire doth find its
sphere
Soaring aloft, and I am all ablaze,
Heavenward with it my flight must
needs be sped.



LX

FIRST READING

LOVE'S JUSTIFICATION

Ben può talor col mio.

SOMETIMES my love I dare to
entertain

With soaring hope not over-credu-
lous ;

Since if all human loves were im-
pious,

Unto what end did God the world
ordain ?

For loving thee what license is more
plain

Love's Justification

Than that I praise thereby the
glorious
Source of all joys divine, that com-
fort us
In thee, and with chaste fires our
soul sustain ?
False hope belongs unto that love
alone
Which with declining beauty wanes
and dies,
And, like the face it worships, fades
away.
That hope is true which the pure heart
hath known,
Which alters not with time or death's
decay,
Yielding on earth earnest of Para-
dise.



LX

SECOND READING

LOVE'S JUSTIFICATION

Ben può talor col casto.

IT must be right sometimes to entertain

Chaste love with hope not over-credulous ;

Since if all human loves were impious,

Unto what end did God the world ordain ?

If I love thee and bend beneath thy reign,

Love's Justification

'T is for the sake of beauty glorious
Which in thine eyes divine is stored
for us;

And drives all evil thought from its
domain.

That is not love whose tyranny we own
In loveliness that every moment
dies ;

Which, like the face it worships,
fades away :

True love is that which the pure heart
hath known,

Which alters not with time or
death's decay,

Yielding on earth earnest of Para-
dise.



LXI

IRREPARABLE LOSS

AFTER THE DEATH OF VITTORIA
COLONNA

Se 'l mie rozzo martello.

WHEN my rude hammer to the
stubborn stone
Gives human shape, now that, now
this, at will,
Following his hand who wields and
guides it still,
It moves upon another's feet alone :
But that which dwells in heaven, the
world doth fill

Irreparable Loss

With beauty by pure motions of its
own ;
And since tools fashion tools which
else were none,
Its life makes all that lives with
living skill.
Now, for that every stroke excels the
more
The higher at the forge it doth
ascend,
Her soul that fashioned mine hath
sought the skies :
Wherefore unfinished I must meet my
end,
If God, the great Artificer, denies
That aid which was unique on earth
before.



LXII

LOVE'S TRIUMPH
AFTER DEATH

AFTER THE DEATH OF VITTORIA
COLONNA

Quand' el ministro de' sospir.

WHEN she who was the source of
all my sighs,
Fled from the world, herself, my
straining sight,
Nature who gave us that unique de-
light,
Was sunk in shame, and we had
weeping eyes.

Love's Triumph Over Death

Yet shall not vauntful Death enjoy
this prize,
This sun of suns which then he veiled
in night ;
For Love hath triumphed, lifting up
her light
On earth and 'mid the saints in Para-
dise.
What though remorseless and im-
piteous doom
Deemed that the music of her deeds
would die,
And that her splendour would be
sunk in gloom ?
The poet's page exalts her to the sky
With life more living in the lifeless
tomb,
And Death translates her soul to
reign on high.



LXIII

AFTER SUNSET

AFTER THE DEATH OF VITTORIA
COLONNA

Be' mi dove'.

WELL might I in those days so
fortunate,
What time the sun lightened my
path above,
Have soared from earth to heaven,
raised by her love
Who winged my labouring soul and
sweetened fate.
That sun hath set ; and I with hope
elate

After Sunset

Who deemed that those bright days
would never move,
Find that my thankless soul, de-
prived thereof,
Declines to death, while heaven still
bars the gate.
Love lent me wings ; my path was like
a stair ;
A lamp unto my feet, that sun was
given ;
And death was safety and great joy
to find.
But dying now, I shall not climb to
heaven ;
Nor can mere memory cheer my
heart's despair :—
What help remains when hope is
left behind ?



LXIV

A WASTED BRAND

AFTER THE DEATH OF VITTORIA
COLONNA

Qual meraviglia è.

I F being near the fire I burned with
it,

Now that its flame is quenched and
doth not show,

What wonder if I waste within and
glow,

Dwindling away to cinders bit by
bit ?

While still it burned, I saw so brightly
lit

A Wasted Brand

That splendour whence I drew my
grievous woe,
That from its sight alone could pleas-
ure flow,
And death and torment both seemed
exquisite.
But now that heaven hath robbed me
of the blaze
Of that great fire which burned and
nourished me,
A coal that smoulders 'neath the ash
am I.
Unless Love furnish wood fresh flames
to raise,
I shall expire with not one spark to
see,
So quickly into embers do I die !



LXV

ON THE BRINK OF DEATH

TO GIORGIO VASARI

Giunto è già.

NOW hath my life across a stormy
sea,
Like a frail bark, reached that wide
port where all
Are bidden, ere the final reckoning
fall
Of good and evil for eternity.
Now know I well how that fond
phantasy
Which made my soul the worshipper
and thrall

On the Brink of Death

Of earthly art is vain ; how criminal
Is that which all men seek unwillingly.

Those amorous thoughts which were
so lightly dressed,

What are they when the double
death is nigh ?

The one I know for sure, the other
dread.

Painting nor sculpture now can lull to
rest

My soul, that turns to His great love
on high,

Whose arms to clasp us on the cross
were spread.



LXVI

VANITY OF VANITIES

TO GIORGIO VASARI

Le favole del mondo.

THE fables of the world have filched
away

The time I had for thinking upon
God ;

His grace lies buried 'neath obliv-
ion's sod,

Whence springs an evil crop of sins
always.

What makes another wise, leads me
astray,

Vanity of Vanities

Slow to discern the bad path I have
trod :

Hope fades, but still desire ascends
that God

May free me from self-love, my sure
decay.

Shorten half-way my road to heaven
from earth !

Dear Lord, I cannot even half-way
rise

Unless Thou help me on this pil-
grimage.

Teach me to hate the world so little
worth,

And all the lovely things I clasp and
prize,

That endless life, ere death, may be
my wage.



LXVII

A PRAYER FOR FAITH

Non è più bassa.

THERE 'S not on earth a thing
more vile and base

Than, lacking Thee, I feel myself
to be :

For pardon prays my own debility,
Yearning in vain to lift me to Thy
face.

Stretch to me, Lord, that chain whose
links enlacc

All heavenly gifts and all felicity—
Faith, whereunto I strive perpetu-
ally,

A Prayer for Faith

Yet cannot find (my fault) her perfect grace.
That gift of gifts, the rarer 't is, the more
I count it great ; more great, because to earth
Without it neither peace nor joy is given.
If Thou Thy blood so lovingly didst pour,
Let not that bounty fail or suffer dearth,
Withholding Faith that opes the doors of heaven.



LXVIII

URBINO

TO MONSIGNOR LODOVICO
BECCADELLI

Per croce e grazia.

GOD'S grace, the cross, our troubles
multiplied,
Will make us meet in heaven, full
well I know :
Yet ere we yield our breath on earth
below,
Why need a little solace be denied ?
Though seas and mountains and rough
ways divide

Urbino

Our feet asunder, neither frost nor
snow
Can make the soul her ancient love
forego ;
Nor chains nor bonds the wings of
thought have tied.
Borne by these wings, with thee I
dwell for aye,
And weep, and of my dead Urbino
talk,
Who, were he living, now perchance
would be—
For so 't was planned—thy guest as
well as I.
Warned by his death, another way
I walk
To meet him where he waits to live
with me.



LXIX

WAITING FOR DEATH.

Di morte certo.

MY death must come ; but when, I
do not know :

Life 's short, and little life remains
for me :

Fain would my flesh abide ; my soul
would flee

Heavenward, for still she calls on me
to go.

Blind is the world ; and evil here be-
low

O'erwhelms and triumphs over hon-
esty :

Waiting for Death

The light is quenched ; quenched
too is bravery :

Lies reign, and truth hath ceased
her face to show.

When will that day dawn, Lord, for
which he waits

Who trusts in Thee? Lo, this pro-
longed delay

Destroys all hope and robs the soul
of life.

Why streams the light from those
celestial gates,

If death prevent the day of grace,
and stay

Our souls for ever in the toils of
strife ?



LXX

A PRAYER FOR STRENGTH

Carico d' anni.

BURDENED with years and full of
sinfulness,

With evil custom grown inveterate,
Both deaths I dread that close before
me wait,

Yet feed my heart on poisonous
thoughts no less.

No strength I find in mine own feeble-
ness

To change or life or love or use or fate,
Unless Thy heavenly guidance come,
though late,

A Prayer for Strength

Which only helps and stays our
nothingness.

'T is not enough, dear Lord, to make
me yearn

For that celestial home, where yet
my soul

May be new made, and not, as erst,
of nought :

Nay, ere Thou strip her mortal vest-
ment, turn

My steps toward the steep ascent,
that whole

And pure before Thy face she may
be brought.



LXXI

A PRAYER FOR PURIFICATION

Forse perchè d' altrui.

PERCHANCE that I might learn
what pity is,
That I might laugh at erring men
no more,
Secure in my own strength as here-
tofore,
My soul hath fallen from her state
of bliss :
Nor know I under any flag but this
How fighting I may 'scape those
perils sore,

A Prayer for Purification

Or how survive the rout and horrid
 roar
Of adverse hosts, if I Thy succour
 miss.
O flesh! O blood! O cross! O pain
 extreme !
By you may those foul sins be puri-
 fied,
Wherein my fathers were, and I was
 born !
Lo, Thou alone art good : let Thy
 supreme
Pity my state of evil cleanse and
 hide—
So near to death, so far from God,
 forlorn.



LXXII

A PRAYER FOR AID

Deh fammiti vedere.

OH, make me see Thee, Lord, wher-
e'er I go !

If mortal beauty sets my soul on
fire,

That flame when near to Thine must
needs expire,

And I with love of only Thee shall
glow.

Dear Lord, Thy help I seek against
this woe,

These torments that my spirit vex
and tire ;

A Prayer for Aid

Thou only with new strength canst
re-inspire

My will, my sense, my courage faint
and low.

Thou gavest me on earth this soul
divine ;

And Thou within this body weak
and frail

Didst prison it—how sadly there to
live !

How can I make its lot less vile than
mine ?

Without Thee, Lord, all goodness
seems to fail.

To alter fate is God's prerogative.



LXXIII

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Scarco d' un' importuna.

FREED from a burden sore and
grievous band,

Dear Lord, and from this wearying
world untied,

Like a frail bark I turn me to Thy
side,

As from a fierce storm to a tranquil
land.

Thy thorns, Thy nails, and either
bleeding hand,

With Thy mild gentle piteous face,
provide

At the Foot of the Cross

Promise of help and mercies multiplied,
And hope that yet my soul secure
may stand.

Let not Thy holy eyes be just to see
My evil past, Thy chastened ears to
hear

And stretch the arm of judgment to
my crime :

Let Thy blood only lave and succour
me,

Yielding more perfect pardon, better
cheer,

As older still I grow with lengthen-
ing time.



LXXIV

FIRST READING

A PRAYER FOR GRACE IN
DEATH

S' avvien che spesso.

WHAT though strong love of life
doth flatter me
With hope of yet more years on
earth to stay,
Death none the less draws nearer
day by day,
Who to sad souls alone comes linger-
ingly.
Yet why desire long life and jollity,

A Prayer for Grace in Death

If in our griefs alone to God we pray ?
Glad fortune, length of days, and
pleasure slay
The soul that trusts to their felicity.
Then if at any hour through grace
divine
The fiery shafts of love and faith
that cheer
And fortify the soul, my heart assail,
Since nought achieve these mortal
powers of mine,
Straight may I wing my way to
heaven ; for here
With lengthening days good
thoughts and wishes fail.



LXXIV

SECOND READING

A PRAYER FOR GRACE IN DEATH

Parmi che spesso.

OFTTIMES my great desire doth
flatter me
With hope on earth yet many years
to stay :
Still Death, the more I love it, day
by day
Takes from the life I love so tenderly.
What better time for that dread change
could be,
If in our griefs alone to God we pray ?

A Prayer for Grace in Death

Oh, lead me, Lord, oh, lead me far
away

From every thought that lures my
soul from Thee !

Yea, if at any hour, through grace of
Thine,

The fervent zeal of love and faith
that cheer

And fortify the soul, my heart assail,
Since nought achieve these mortal
powers of mine,

Plant, like a saint in heaven, that
virtue here ;

For, lacking Thee, all good must
faint and fail.



LXXV

HEART-COLDNESS

Vorrei voler, Signior.

FAIN would I wish what my heart
cannot will :

Between it and the fire a veil of ice
Deadens the fire, so that I deal in lies;
My words and actions are discordant
still.

I love Thee with my tongue, then
mourn my fill ;

For love warms not my heart, nor
can I rise,

Or ope the doors of Grace, who from
the skies

Heart=Coldness

Might flood my soul, and pride and
passion kill.
Rend Thou the veil, dear Lord! Break
Thou that wall
Which with its stubbornness retards
the rays
Of that bright sun this earth hath
dulled for me !
Send down Thy promised light to cheer
and fall
On Thy fair spouse, that I with love
may blaze,
And, free from doubt, my heart feel
only Thee !



LXXVI

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Non fur men lieti.

NOT less elate than smitten with
wild woe

To see not them but Thee by death
undone,

Were those blest souls, when Thou
above the sun

Didst raise, by dying, men that lay
so low :

Elate, since freedom from all ills that
flow

From their first fault for Adam's
race was won ;

The Death of Christ

Sore smitten, since in torment fierce
God's Son
Served servants on the cruel cross
below.

Heaven showed she knew Thee, who
thou wert and whence,
Veiling her eyes above the riven
earth ;
The mountains trembled and the
seas were troubled.

He took the Fathers from hell's dark-
ness dense :
The torments of the damnéd fiends
redoubled :
Man only joyed, who gained bap-
tismal birth.



LXXVII

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Mentre m' attrista.

MID weariness and woe I find some
cheer

In thinking of the past when I recall
My weakness and my sins, and
reckon all

The vain expense of days that dis-
appear :

This cheers by making, ere I die, more
clear

The frailty of what men delight mis-
call ;

But saddens me to think how rarely
fall

The Blood of Christ

God's grace and mercies in life's
latest year.

For though Thy promises our faith
compel,

Yet, Lord, what man shall venture
to maintain

That pity will condone our long
neglect?

Still from Thy blood poured forth we
know full well

How without measure was Thy
martyr's pain,

How measureless the gifts we dare
expect.



LXXVIII

ON HIS FATHER'S DEATH

THOU 'RT dead of dying, and art
made divine ;

Nor need'st thou fear to change or
life or will ;

Wherefore my soul well-nigh doth
envy thine.

Fortune and time across thy threshold
still

Shall dare not pass, the which mid
us below

Bring doubtful joyance blent with
certain ill.

On His Father's Death

Clouds are there none to dim for thee
 heaven's glow ;
The measured hours compel not thee
 at all ;
Chance or necessity thou canst not
 know.
Thy splendour wanes not when our
 night doth fall,
Nor waxes with day's light however
 clear,
Nor when our suns the season's
 warmth recall.





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